

# Yellow crazy ants

*Anoplolepis gracilipes*



Yellow crazy ants are an introduced species of tramp ant, thought to originate in Africa. The name 'crazy ant' refers to the ants' erratic walking style and frantic movements, especially when disturbed.

Yellow crazy ants can form densely populated super-colonies with more than one queen. These super-colonies can have a huge impact on natural environments, including both native plants and animals. Yellow crazy ants can damage crops, horticulture and honeybee hives, and can adversely impact on our outdoor lifestyle.

## Legal requirements

Yellow crazy ants are restricted tramp ants under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. They must not be given away, sold, or released into the environment without a permit. The Act requires everyone to take all reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with tramp ants. This is called a general biosecurity obligation (GBO). This fact sheet gives examples of how you can meet your GBO.



## Description

Adults have a long slender body approximately 5 mm in length and are yellow to brownish in colour. The abdomen is usually a uniform dark brown but sometimes is striped dark brown. Legs and antennae also measure approximately 5 mm in length and appear very long in comparison with the body.

Yellow crazy ants have no functional sting, but spray formic acid to subdue prey and act as a defence mechanism, especially when disturbed. In large amounts, this acid may burn or otherwise irritate the skin and eyes of animals and humans. On Christmas Island, yellow crazy ants have decimated the land crab population and radically affected the ecosystem of the island. Yellow crazy ants also protect and farm sap-sucking insects, allowing dense populations of these insects to live on native plants. The high abundance of sap-sucking insects on native plants eventually weaken them, allowing various plant diseases to take hold and decreasing plant health or resulting in premature plant death.

## Life cycle

Worker ants have a life cycle of 76–84 days. Queens survive for several years. Workers are produced throughout the year, but production fluctuates.

Sexual offspring are produced at any time in the year but generally 1–2 months prior to the rainy season.

## Methods of spread

Yellow crazy ants can be spread in soil and produce in the agricultural and horticultural industry; on contaminated military, mining and commercial road transport; and in sea and air freight on timber, goods, packaging material and pallets. Yellow crazy ants have been most commonly spread to industrial and transport businesses via timber, timber products and other construction materials.

## Habitat and distribution

Yellow crazy ants were first discovered in Cairns, Queensland in 2001. A number of infestations have been detected in residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural and forest environments in coastal areas of Queensland and in some suburbs in south east Queensland, Hervey Bay, Cairns and Townsville. Yellow crazy ants are also present elsewhere in Australia including the Northern Territory and Christmas Island.

Yellow crazy ants prefer to nest in areas with access to water or some moisture, such as along creek banks, in utility service pits or piles of timber, or under logs, debris or leaf litter. They will also nest at the base of trees, around perimeters of buildings and within retaining walls where moisture is retained.

## Control

The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks posed by yellow crazy ants. This fact sheet provides information and some options for crazy ants.

## Prevention and early detection

Checking for the presence of yellow crazy ants can help prevent further spread of this pest. Landholders and businesses should check their properties and any materials that could harbour yellow crazy ants. This includes soil, timber, timber products and other construction materials, agricultural and horticultural produce, packaging and other potential vectors of spread.

## Baiting

Yellow crazy ant infestations can be treated by spraying or baiting. Landholders may choose to use insecticides that are registered for the control of ants or call a local pest control operator. Distance® Plus Ant Bait is an insect growth regulator, specifically a juvenile hormone mimic, similar to the naturally occurring insect growth hormones which control fertility, egg viability and pupation. Distance® Plus Ant Bait breaks the reproductive life cycle of ants, eventually causing starvation of the colony through lack of replacement of foraging workers.

Baits may be laid utilising either hand held spreaders, spreaders attached to motor vehicles or aerial application.

Yellow crazy ants could become resistant to Distance® Plus Ant Bait, therefore it is recommended to use a combined approach of different insecticides and integrated land management practices.

Insecticides should always be used in accordance with the label instructions. Further information about insecticides can be found on the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority website [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

## Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.



**Table 1. Insecticide for the control of yellow crazy ants**

Situation	Insecticide	Rate	Comments
<p><b>Domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas</b> (including parks, golf courses, sports grounds, paths and walkways, gardens, lawns and turf)</p> <p><b>Cropping areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plantations and orchards including olives, citrus and tropical fruits and tree nuts.</li> <li>• Other fruits and vegetables, herbs, spices</li> <li>• Pasture</li> <li>• Native and managed forests</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental management areas</b> National parks and reserves where invasive ants are a threat to ecosystem values</p>	<p>Distance® Plus Ant Bait Pyriproxyfen Group 7C Insecticide</p>	<p>2–4 kg per ha 2–4 g per 10 m<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Distance® Plus Ant Bait should be applied in the early spring or summer at the first sign of ant activity. Application is most effective when ants are actively foraging</p> <p>For most situations the lower rate is adequate. However, in northern Australia and where heavy infestations occur, use the higher rate. Multiple applications may also be required for heavy infestations. Multiple applications may also be required for certain species that have multiple reproductive females inhabiting the same nest, to ensure that all reproductive females are exposed to the juvenile hormone mimic. These include Argentine ant (<i>Linepithema humile</i>) and Pony ants (<i>Rhytidoponera</i>)</p> <p>DO NOT exceed three applications per year and a minimum of three months between each treatment</p> <p>Avoid exposure to terrestrial arthropods such as land crabs. Apply only in areas of high ant density with zero or low crab density</p> <p><b>Vegetables</b> DO NOT apply directly to crop plants Apply to inter-row areas only</p> <p><b>Poultry</b> DO NOT apply in pasture or other areas where poultry are or are intended to be feeding and/or grazing. Baits may only be laid in situations where direct access to the bait by poultry is not possible e.g. in situations with maintained caged poultry above the ground/areas to be baited</p>

**Directions for use**

Restrictions:

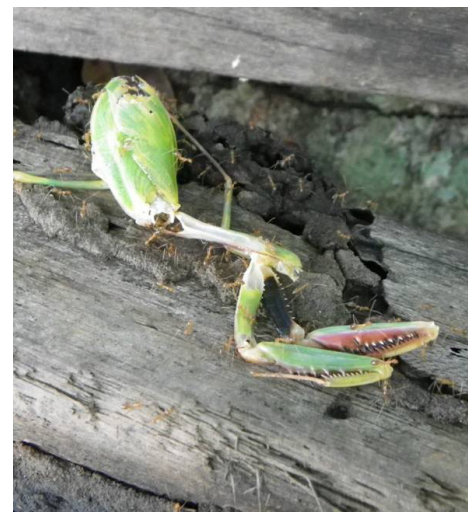
- DO NOT apply direct onto water
- DO NOT apply within 20 m water when applying by aerial application  
Turn off/close the granular applicator during aerial application over or near water
- DO NOT apply as a preventative measure for ant control
- DO NOT apply more than one application per year where terrestrial arthropods such as land crabs may occur
- DO NOT water treated areas for at least 24 hours after application.



Yellow crazy ants smothering pipe



Yellow crazy ants farming aphids



Yellow crazy ants dismantling a praying mantis

This fact sheet is developed with funding support from the Land Protection Fund.

Fact sheets are available from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) service centres and our Customer Service Centre (telephone 13 25 23). Check our website at [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this fact sheet should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, DAF does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.